

## 7.5 Workplace Health and Safety Laws

This section contains more detail than you will need for your work placement or work experience, but it provides important preparation for the world of work.

Laws to protect people from occupational injury and disease apply in every workplace in New South Wales.

### Who Is Covered?

Workplace health and safety laws apply to:

- employers
- employees
- self-employed people
- people who have control of workplaces (e.g. owners)
- people who design, manufacture and supply equipment and substances for use in workplaces
- people who design and construct buildings.

These laws give every person in every workplace a right to be involved in health and safety. Employers and employees should work together to reduce and eliminate hazards, and to find practical ways to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace, including members of the public.

### Employer Responsibilities

Employers should take all reasonable and practical steps to see that work is done safely.

Employers must provide:

- a safe working environment
- safe systems of work
- training and information
- supervision
- protective clothing and equipment
- records of all accidents.

## **A Safe Working Environment**

The employer must keep work areas, machinery and equipment in a safe condition for employees, customers and clients.

## **Safe Systems of Work**

The employer must make sure that systems exist to enable workers to work safely. The employer should also make sure that employees are aware of any potential hazards.

## **Training and Information**

Training should be given in safe work procedures. The employer has the responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy workplace and for providing training, instruction and supervision.

Information should be provided that tells employees about hazards in the workplace and improves their understanding of safe work procedures. The information does not have to be written; it may be spoken or include posters, videos and tapes.

Employers should provide information for young and new employees through induction programs. Induction training gives employees the knowledge and skills to participate in an organisation's health and safety system when they begin their jobs.

## **Supervision**

Employers should ensure that employees are not exposed to hazards at work. Supervision should include regular checks to make sure health and safety instructions are being followed.

Employers should consult with employees and health and safety representatives, and make sure equipment and materials are used, stored, transported and disposed of safely.

## **Protective Clothing and Equipment**

Employers are required to provide personal protective equipment and clothing when hazards in the workplace cannot be eliminated.

This includes such things as overalls, safety boots, safety glasses, gloves, goggles, respirators and earmuffs. Employees should be instructed and trained in the correct use of any protective equipment provided by the employer.

## **Accident Recording**

The employer must keep a written record of all accidents that occur in the workplace.

## Employee Responsibilities

Once you have been properly trained and instructed, you should take care to look after your own safety, and not put other workers at risk.

To keep yourself, other workers and the public safe, you must:

- obey all health and safety instructions
- work safely and wear protective equipment if needed
- follow the correct procedure when you are doing your job
- report hazards
- report accidents or near misses
- cooperate with the employer on health and safety matters.

### **Remember!**

**Cooperation and consultation are the key  
to a safe and healthy workplace.**

**Employers and workers must talk to each other  
to solve health and safety problems at work.**



## ACTIVITY

# Workplace Health and Safety Laws

## Responsibilities

Fill in the missing words in the passage below. You will work out which number goes with which letter. Fill in the table as you go. It will make the exercise easier for you. (Three have been done to get you started.) When you have finished, you will be able to unravel a secret message.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
1				3								7													

Both employers and \_\_\_\_\_ must work to

3 7 21 19 8 13 3 3 10

provide a safe working \_\_\_\_\_.

3 20 24 5 22 8 20 7 3 20 23

Employers are responsible for \_\_\_\_\_,

23 22 1 5 20 5 20 4

supervision, providing \_\_\_\_\_ equipment

21 22 8 23 3 2 23 5 24 3

clothing, and recording workplace \_\_\_\_\_.

1 2 2 5 15 3 20 23 10

Employees need to: \_\_\_\_\_ all health and safety instructions;

8 14 3 13

wear protective equipment when needed; \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ the

16 8 19 19 8 12

correct procedure on the job; report \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ,

17 1 26 1 22 15 10

and accidents; and cooperate with the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

3 7 21 19 8 13 3 22

on health and safety \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

5 10 10 11 3 10

## Secret Message

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
3 7 21 19 8 13 3 22 10 1 20 15

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
12 8 22 6 3 22 10 7 11 10 23 23 1 19 6

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
23 8 3 1 2 17 8 23 17 3 22 23 8

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
10 8 19 24 3 10 1 16 3 23 13 1 20 15

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
17 3 1 19 23 17 21 22 8 14 19 3 7 10

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
1 23 12 8 22 6

## 7.6 Health and Safety Committees and Representatives

### Committees

#### How Are They Established?

A health and safety committee will be established in a workplace if:

- there are 20 or more people at the workplace and most of them ask for a committee to be formed
- requested by WorkCover.

Employers may establish a health and safety committee on their own initiative.

#### Who Is on This Committee?

- An elected representative of the employees.
- Other members appointed by the employer.

#### What Does This Committee Do?

A health and safety committee enables employers and employees to work together to make the job safe.

### Representatives

#### Who Are They?

Health and Safety Representatives are elected by co-workers to act on their behalf in resolving health and safety issues and maintaining safe conditions. Employees at every workplace are allowed by law to elect their own health and safety representative.

Many large organisations also have health and safety officers who are not elected by employees. These officers are appointed by employers to make sure health and safety induction, information, training and supervision are provided for employees.

#### What Do They Do?

A health and safety representative makes it easier to bring health and safety problems to the attention of management, so they can be dealt with and resolved.

New employees should be introduced to their health and safety representative as part of their health and safety training. This person can help you to recognise and avoid health and safety hazards and risks in your workplace.




---

 ACTIVITY
 

---

## Health and Safety Committees and Representatives

### A. Problems and Solutions

The role of workplace health and safety representatives and committees is to bring health and safety problems to the attention of the management.

With a partner or in a small group, list things around your school that you think may be dangerous. Make some suggestions on how these problems might be fixed.

Problem	Suggested Solution
e.g. Uneven path at the front gate.	e.g. Re-concrete the path.

### B. True or False?

For each statement, circle whether it is true or false. If false, write it correctly.

- 1) Health and safety representatives are people elected by co-workers to act on their behalf in resolving health and safety issues. **True / False**

---



---

- 2) It is difficult to bring health and safety matters to your employer's attention through the health and safety representative. **True / False**

---

---

- 3) You should be introduced to the health and safety representative when you need to report a concern. **True / False**

---

---

- 4) Health and safety officers are appointed by the employer. **True / False**

---

---

- 5) In a workplace with 20 or more workers, employers do not have to form a safety committee, even if most workers request one. **True / False**

---

---

- 6) Employers may form a health and safety committee on their own initiative. **True/False**

---

---

- 7) Health and safety committees help employees and employers to work together to make the workplace safe. **True / False**

---

---



## 7.7 Problem-solving

### Resolving Health and Safety Issues

If you are working on a task that you believe is unsafe or unhealthy:

- Talk to your supervisor and health and safety representative about the problem.
- They will then go to the employer, who is responsible for assessing the risk.
- Together, you should agree on ways to resolve the problem. If you are in immediate danger, you should be given alternative work.

It is the *employee's* responsibility to report hazards.

It is the *employer's* responsibility to provide a safe workplace.

#### **Remember!**

**Most accidents can be prevented with safe work procedures.**

### The Right to Refuse Work

If you think the work you are doing is dangerous, and that there is an *immediate risk* of serious injury or harm:

- You have the right to refuse to do this work.
- You must first tell your supervisor or employer, and your health and safety representative, of your concerns.

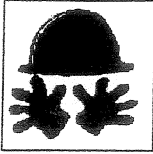
### Resolving the Problem

The problem then has to be resolved by the employer and the health and safety representative or committee, or employees. If these people cannot resolve the matter, they may then request a WorkCover inspector to attend the workplace.

An employer can give you other work to do away from the danger.

If you have refused to work, on reasonable grounds, you are entitled to the same pay and other benefits (if any) that you usually get, unless you have left the workplace without authorisation of the employer, or if you have refused to do reasonable alternative work.

If there are any unresolved problems related to your pay or benefits, you or the employer can refer your case to an industrial magistrate.




---

 ACTIVITY
 

---

## Problem-solving

### A. The Right to Refuse Work

Answer the following questions.

- 1) You have the right to refuse to do the work your employer has told you to do when  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What does 'immediate risk of serious injury or harm to yourself or others' mean?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Would you refuse to work if someone left a broom where another worker might trip over it?      **Yes / No**  
 Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Give an example of a safety situation where you might refuse to work.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) If you have refused to do work, you are entitled to the same pay and other benefits unless you  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## B. What Would You Do?

Working in pairs, discuss what you would do in each of the following cases. Report your ideas back to the class. There is room to note your ideas.

- 1) You are working in a factory and you are asked to operate a piece of equipment that you have no experience on. No one will be supervising you.

What should you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) You are a spray painter and your safety mask doesn't seem to fit correctly. You have tried adjusting it, but it still isn't right.

What should you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Juan has refused to work on a piece of machinery where the safety guard is broken. He comes to you, the health and safety representative, with his concern.

What should you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- 4) You injure yourself at work by slipping on a wet floor.

What should you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) You have injured yourself at work, and the doctor says you need time off to recover.

What should you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.8 Accidents

### Steps if You Have an Accident

1. See your supervisor.
2. Get first aid — you may be able to go straight back to work.
3. If you need to see a doctor for treatment, ask for a WorkCover medical certificate.
4. Get a claim form from your employer.
5. Remember exactly what you were doing, how you were doing it and who else saw the accident happen.
6. Tell your employer about any injury as soon as possible after it happens.
7. Fill in an accident report. Get help from someone you trust if you need to.



### How WorkCover Can Help

The WorkCover system provides help to return to work, and compensation for an injury. If you need time off work to recover from a work-related injury, you must return to work as soon as you are fit to do so. This may involve a gradual return — you might start working for only a couple of hours, or have lighter work to do.

The NSW WorkCover Scheme is a pension-based weekly compensation system for workers injured at work. This system is designed to provide income support as well as paying for medical and injury management expenses, and providing lump-sum payments to injured workers in cases of permanent impairment.

### An Accident Has Happened to Me!

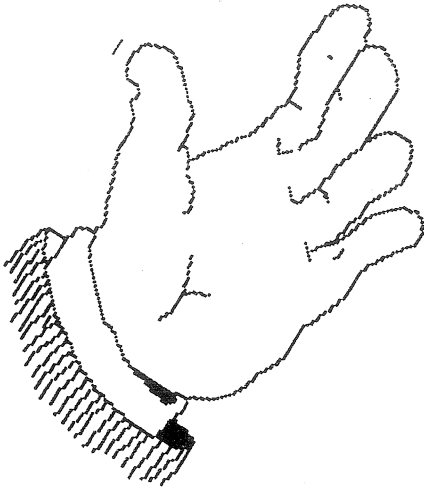
#### What Should I Do?

- Stay calm.
- Is there any way I could hurt myself if I move?
- Tell someone.

## Steps if Someone Else Has an Accident

### RACE

**R**escue      Assist the person in immediate danger. (Only if safe to do so.)



**A**larm      Raise the alarm. (Tell someone else at work and/or ring 000.)

**C**ontain      Restrict the damage, attend to the emergency and provide first aid. (Only if safe to do so.)

**E**vacuate      Consider evacuation of non-essential people.




---

 ACTIVITY
 

---

# Accidents

## Steps

- 1) What steps would you take if you had an accident at work? Put words into this text to explain what you would do. You may need more than one word in some spaces.

Firstly, I would see \_\_\_\_\_, then I would get some  
 \_\_\_\_\_. If the injury is serious enough, I may need to go to a  
 \_\_\_\_\_ for treatment and get a \_\_\_\_\_ certificate.

At work, I will need to fill in an \_\_\_\_\_.

I may need to have some time off work to get better. WorkCover will provide me with  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

If a worker has a permanent impairment from an injury, they may receive a  
 \_\_\_\_\_ payment.

- 2) List the four steps to take if someone else has an accident.

---



---



---



---



# Module 7

## Safety in the Workplace

### Text 2





Published by the NSW Department of School Education. © November 2000

This work is copyright. Materials may be reproduced for the purposes of classroom teaching only. Apart from these purposes, no part may be reproduced by any process without the prior written permission of the publisher.

These materials were supported by a grant from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

These materials have a strictly limited print run. They are accompanied by a CD-ROM, on which they are replicated as portable document files (PDFs). These may be viewed and printed in Acrobat Reader (3.0 or higher).

# Board of Studies Syllabus Links

## Text 2\*

\* This unit is designed to provide information on occupational health and safety issues in the workplace. This is a simplified version of the content presented in Text 1.

### Links to Work Education, Work Studies CEC and Work and the Community Life Skills course

WORK EDUCATION Stage 5		WORK STUDIES CEC Stage 6		WORK AND THE COMMUNITY LIFE SKILLS COURSE Stage 6	
Elective 1	Workplace Induction	Core 2	Experiencing Work	8.4	Introduction to- Workplace or Community-Based Learning Environments
Elective 2	Workplace First Aid	Module 10	Occupational Health and Safety and First Aid in the Workplace	8.5	Dealing with Workplace and Community-Based Environmental Issues

### Links to Industry Curriculum Framework Courses

This module may be used to support the delivery of Stage 6 Industry Curriculum Framework courses. Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine the relevance of the materials to the units of competency being delivered. The materials should be placed in an industry-specific context.



# Contents

7.1	The Why and Who of Workplace Safety .....	7
	Why Learn about Workplace Health and Safety? .....	7
	Who Is Responsible? .....	7
7.2	WorkCover .....	8
	About WorkCover NSW .....	8
7.3	Making Yourself Safe .....	9
	SAM Safety Strategy .....	9
	FCF Safety Strategy .....	10
7.4	Common Hazards .....	11
	Manual Handling .....	11
	Hazardous Substances .....	12
	Noise .....	13
	Electricity .....	14
	Mechanical Equipment .....	15
	Heights .....	16
7.5	Workplace Health and Safety Laws .....	17
	Employer Responsibilities .....	17
	Employee Responsibilities .....	17
7.6	Workplace Health and Safety Committees and Representatives ....	18
7.7	Problem-solving .....	18
	Resolving Health and Safety Problems .....	18
	The Right to Refuse Work .....	18
7.8	Accidents .....	19
	Steps if You Have an Accident .....	19
	Steps if Someone Else Has an Accident .....	20



## 7.1 The Why and Who of Workplace Safety

### Why Learn about Workplace Health and Safety?

Accidents can happen anywhere. Many accidents happen in the workplace.

The best way to prevent an accident is to work safely.

### Who Is Responsible?

Health and safety at work is the responsibility of both the employer *and* the employee.

When you are at work, your employer must:

- provide safe work areas and safe equipment and machinery
- show you how to use equipment and machinery properly and supervise you while you use it
- provide equipment that will protect you from dangerous situations.



As an employee, you must:

- follow safety instructions
- use equipment and machinery carefully
- tell a supervisor if you see a dangerous situation or if you are hurt.

## 7.2 WorkCover

### About WorkCover NSW

The WorkCover Authority of NSW:

- is run by the State Government
- makes the laws about health and safety in the workplace
- makes sure the laws are put into practice in the workplace
- helps people who have been injured in the workplace through injury management and workers' compensation.



Anyone can ring the WorkCover Information Centre toll free on 131050 to ask questions about:

- workplace health and safety
- injury management
- workers' compensation.



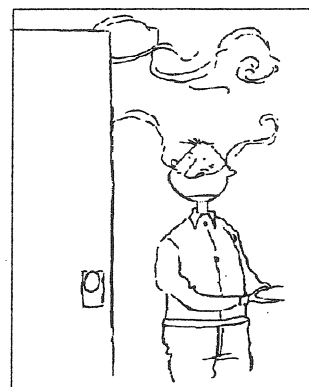
## 7.3 Making Yourself Safe

**‘Where there’s risk,  
pause and think.’**

### SAM Safety Strategy

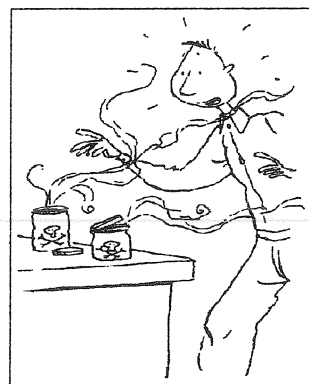
**S**pot the hazard.

A hazard is anything that could hurt you or someone else.



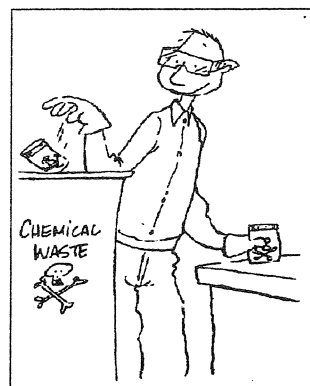
**A**ssess the risk.

Work out how dangerous the hazard is.



**M**ake the change.

Fix the hazard or tell someone who can fix it.





## FCF Safety Strategy

**F**ind it. Is there a hazard that could hurt someone?

**C**heck it out. How dangerous is it?

**F**ix it. Fix it or tell someone.

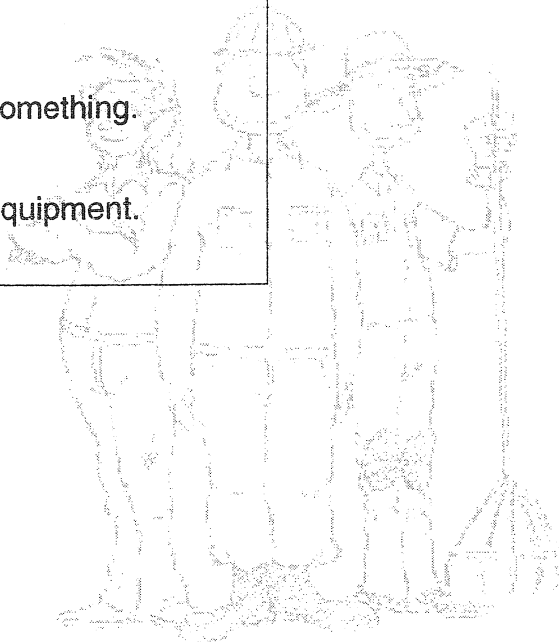


### How to Fix a Hazard

1. Can you fix it?
2. Should you tell someone else?

### How Could You Fix It?

1. Get rid of it.
2. Use or do something else.
3. Put it in a safer place.
4. Add safeguards.
5. Always use the safest way of doing something.
6. Wear safety clothes and use safety equipment.

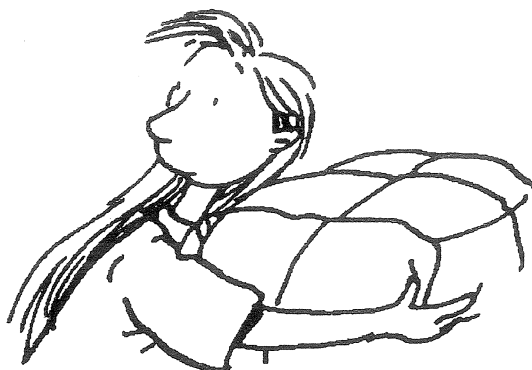


## 7.4 Common Hazards

### Manual Handling

Manual handling means:

- lifting
- putting down
- pushing or pulling
- holding and carrying.



### Reducing the Risk of a Manual Handling Injury

#### Employers

Employers must:

- teach you safe manual handling methods
- tell you about specific manual handling hazards
- make sure the workplace is safe
- have equipment to help you lift, pull, push or lower heavy objects
- let you ask for help when you need it.

#### Employees

Employees should:

- make loads lighter by breaking them into smaller amounts
- lift, bend, twist and reach safely
- prevent injury by using equipment to help
- rest to avoid getting overtired
- give themselves time to get used to a new job.

## Hazardous Substances

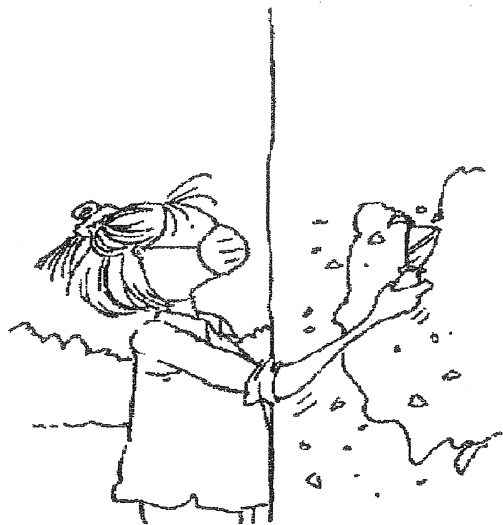
Hazardous substances are dangerous.

They can make you sick, or even kill you.

Hazardous substances can be products you use every day, like cleaning agents. If these products are used in the wrong way, they can do things like make you dizzy or itchy, or worse.

## Working with Hazardous Substances

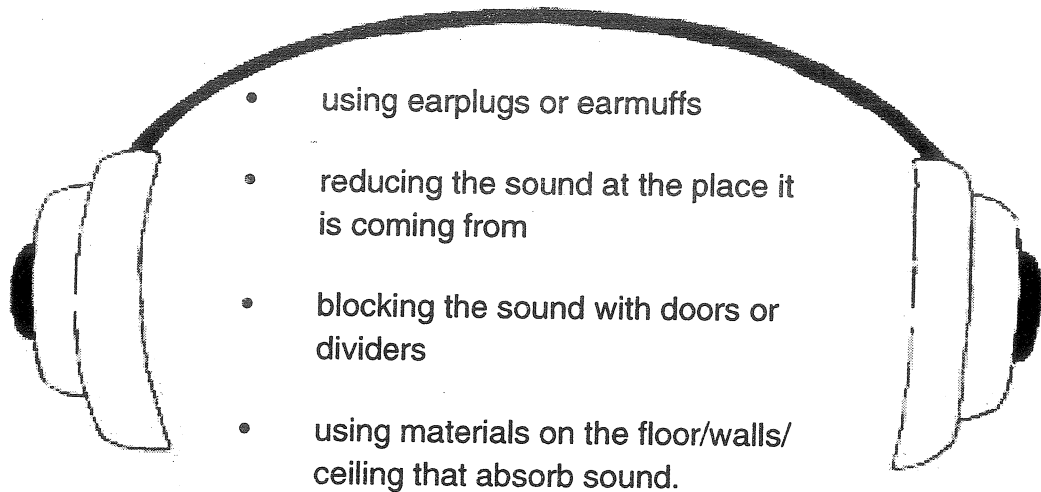
- Know what the hazardous substances are at your workplace.
- Know how to use a product safely.
- Work safely.
- Always wear and use the safety equipment provided.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while working with a hazardous substance.
- Do not keep food or drink near a hazardous substance.
- Wash your hands, face and other exposed areas with soap and water before you go to the toilet, eat or drink.



## Noise

A noisy workplace can damage your hearing. If you are working in a noisy environment, you must look after your hearing.

You can minimise noise damage by:



Early warning signs of hearing loss include:

- ringing in the ears after a noisy activity
- having difficulty understanding what people say
- needing to turn the volume up to hear the radio or television when others don't need to
- not hearing background noises such as a ringing telephone or doorbell.

### What Should You Do if This Happens?

If any of these things happen to you, you need to talk to your supervisor or your health and safety representative to work out ways to reduce the risk.

### **Remember!**

**Lost hearing is gone forever.**

## Electricity

One of the most common accidents is electric shock. Electric shock occurs when a person becomes part of an electrical circuit and the current flows through their body. A fatal shock is called *electrocution*.

### How to Prevent Shock and Electrocution

- Use electrical equipment safely.
- Use safe electrical equipment.
- Don't touch overhead wires.
- Don't try to repair electrical circuits when they are live.



### Electrical Safety Precautions



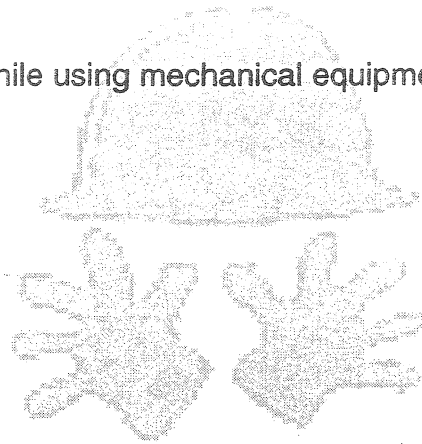
1. Keep equipment safe through regular maintenance.
2. Replace frayed cords or broken power points.
3. After turning off the power at the point, run the equipment to use up any stored energy.
4. Always turn off the power at the point before you pull out the plug.
5. Keep electrical cords off the floor to reduce the risk of damage.
6. Know where to turn off the main electricity supply.
7. Know where the overhead wires are.
8. Keep anything electrical away from water.
9. Don't overload electrical circuits by 'piggy-backing' double adaptors.
10. Only licensed electrical workers can do electrical work.

## Mechanical Equipment

Your workplace should have a maintenance program to make sure that all mechanical equipment is working properly.

The most common injuries while using mechanical equipment are to the:

- fingers
- hands
- eyes.



Protective clothing should be worn when using mechanical equipment.

### 'Danger' and 'Out of Service' Tags

'Danger' tags are red and black.

'Out of Service' tags are yellow and black.

Any equipment with these tags should not be used.

### Guards

Some mechanical equipment is fitted with a guard to prevent accidents. If a piece of equipment has a guard, it should always be used.



## Heights

Dangers involved with working at heights are:

- overhead power lines
- tripping over things left lying around
- not using ladders correctly
- working near unprotected edges
- wearing unsuitable footwear
- moving from one surface to another
- walking on frail or brittle surfaces.



All building sites should have safety features in place. These could include:

- handrails
- scaffolding
- fall arrest systems — harnesses attached to a safety line
- safety nets
- footwear
- ladders.

## 7.5 Workplace Health and Safety Laws

There are laws that protect people from injury and disease in every workplace in New South Wales. These laws apply to employers, employees, self-employed people and people who have control of workplaces (e.g. owners).

### Employer Responsibilities

Employers should take all reasonable and practical steps to see that work is done safely.

Employers must provide:

- a safe working environment
- supervision
- safe systems of work
- protective equipment — if needed
- training and information
- records of all accidents.

### Employee Responsibilities

To keep yourself, other workers and the public safe, you must:

- obey all health and safety instructions
- work safely and wear protective equipment if needed
- follow the correct procedure when you are doing your job
- report hazards
- report accidents or near misses
- cooperate with the employer on health and safety matters.

**Employers and workers must talk to each other to solve health and safety problems at work.**



## 7.6 Workplace Health and Safety Committees and Representatives

In a workplace with more than 20 employees, a majority of employees can ask to have a health and safety committee. They can vote for their representative on the committee. It is the responsibility of this person to inform the employer or management about any health or safety issues that are causing concern.

## 7.7 Problem-solving

### Resolving Health and Safety Problems

If you are working on a task that you believe is unsafe or unhealthy:

- Tell someone.
- Get their help to fix it.
- If it is really dangerous, do something else until it is fixed.

#### **Remember!**

**It is your responsibility to report hazards.  
It is your employer's responsibility to provide a safe workplace.**

### The Right to Refuse Work

If you have followed the steps above and you still think the work you are doing is dangerous — and that there is an *immediate risk* of serious injury or harm — you can refuse to do this work. WorkCover could help you to solve the problem. In the meantime, you are entitled to the same pay that you usually get. However, you cannot refuse to do other suitable work.

#### **Remember!**

**Most accidents can be prevented with safe work procedures.**

## 7.8 Accidents

### Steps if You Have an Accident

1. See your supervisor.
2. Get first aid — you may be able to go straight back to work.
3. Get a WorkCover medical certificate if you need to see a doctor.
4. Get a claim form from your employer.
5. Remember exactly what you were doing, how you were doing it and who else saw the accident happen.
6. Tell your employer about any injury as soon as possible after it happens.
7. Fill in an accident report. Get help from someone you trust if you need to.



### **An Accident Has Happened to Me!**

#### **What Should I Do?**

- Stay calm.
- Is there any way I could hurt myself if I move?
- Call for help, or tell someone.

## Steps if Someone Else Has an Accident

### RACE

**R**<sub>escue</sub>

**A**<sub>larm</sub>

**C**<sub>ontain</sub>

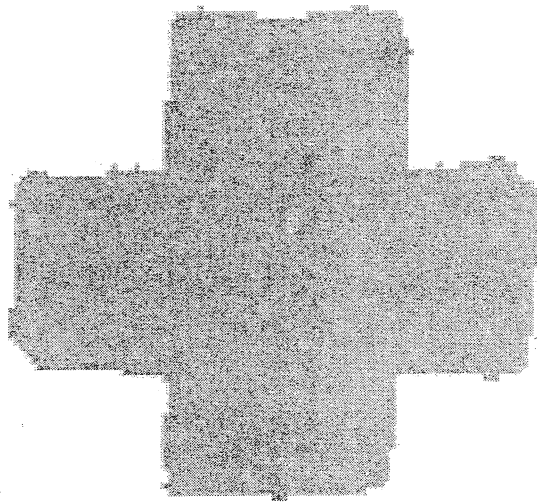
**E**<sub>vacuate</sub>

### RESCUE

Assist the person in immediate danger.  
(Only if safe to do so.)

### ALARM

Raise the alarm.  
(Tell someone  
else at work  
and/or ring 000.)



### EVACUATE

Consider evacuation  
of non-essential  
people.

### CONTAIN

Restrict the damage, attend to the  
emergency and provide first aid.  
(Only if safe to do so.)